

A SONG.

I was ling'ring on the river,
It was quiet then, in fair,
There was life then, and mere sunshine,
There was alchemy in air.
And the sunbeams touched the water
And the ripples caught their light,
And they laughed and fled together,
O'er the meadlands, out of sight.

Where the sky lay deeply mirrored
On the bosom of the stream,
I beheld an image growing,
Swift and silent as a dream.
As the moon breaks through the darkness
In the heaven's vasty space,
In the shadow on the river
Dawned the beauty of a face.

And the eyes, whose wealth of meaning
Lent a lustre to the brow,
Into mine looked one glad moment,
For it seems a moment, now.
Then the wavelets swept it onward
With the river's buoyant course,
And I knew not even whither
As I knew not whence its source.

We must learn at last a patience
That will suffer, not essay
To resist the flux, or ebbing;
There is nothing that shall stay.
But I pray the current bore it
To some fair and gracious clime,
For the sweet, sweet face was yours, dear,
And the flowing river, time.

EVELYN DURAND.

PERFECTION OF FORM IN LITERATURE.

Few men care to say of their work what Browning's
Andrea del Sarto makes bold to say of his art:—

"I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for. . . .
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly
I do not boast, perhaps."

And not many, on the first thought, are disposed to agree with him in saying of other artists who are unable to execute all that they dimly conceive—who cannot paint perfectly the fair visions that float before them:—

"There burns a truer light of God in them.

Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me

Though they come back and can not tell the world."

If this is true, it ought to bring a measure of comfort to a vast crowd of artists of various kinds who are often in despair at the unworthy representation they give of their inward conception, so far does their "reach exceed their grasp." It may be worth while to consider whether in general one who can perfectly delineate the various moods of his mind is not, after all, one whose thoughts are not subtle and suggestive enough, and whose feelings are not strong enough, to perplex his brain or to unnerve his hand.

Two pupils, for example, are studying music. To the one music means little more than rhythm and movement, and he selects compositions accordingly. The other recog-

nizes music as a means of expressing a great variety of thoughts and feelings, and he strives not only to execute correctly as to pitch and rhythm, but also to express the rapidly-changing moods of his composition by softness and delicacy of touch here, by strength and firmness there; now by increasing speed and vigor, and again by languishing strains dying away into silence. At a certain stage in the progress of these two pupils, if they were called on to the disadvantage of the second. He endeavors to express more than the other does, and he is conscious that to express it perfectly is beyond his power yet; thus, to a more difficult task he brings a less confident spirit. The result is that many false touches mar the effect of his piece, while the other pleases by his accurate rendering of a less complex and suggestive composition. Thus the possession of a fine musical susceptibility proves a hindrance to perfect execution. A similar remark might be made with reference to oratory. In sculpture, painting, literature, as well as in many of the useful arts, the self-consciousness that affects an orator or a musician on account of the presence of a critical audience is usually absent. But in all these arts alike, the higher the type of workmanship aimed at, the more likely is the artist to come short of perfection. The more delicate and complex the work, the more easily is it marred. And yet such attempts, failures though they are, often indicate conceptions of rare beauty or power lurking in the background of the imagination, which the artist has not quite succeeded in bringing into distinct outline.

Susceptibility to beauty of form or color, whether in nature or in art, is not confined to those who are able to reproduce that which stirs emotion in them. The charm of a quiet country landscape in early autumn is felt by many a one who never put brush to canvas or pen to paper in an attempt to give artistic expression to the sensations produced. None the less they can appreciate the truth and force of a reproduction of the scene by a skilful artist. It is possible for the perceptive and critical faculties to develop while the corresponding constructive faculties remain comparatively inactive. The ability to appreciate all that is excellent in works of art may run a long way in advance of the ability to produce such works. On the other hand, there may be great facility of execution with little corresponding depth of conception.

In the best poets we find a wider sympathy with nature and a deeper expression of the hearts of men than others possess, but some even eminent poets owe their eminence, I believe, more to facility in the use of language—mere fluency—together with other advantages of circumstance, than to any superior poetic sensitiveness which they possess over the majority of men. Like Andrea del Sarto, they can express almost perfectly what they see, what they wish for, but what they see and wish for has been seen and wished for and written of by many before they gave it expression. Men who see and yearn for forms of beauty and truth that have never yet been suggested to the world are truer poets, even though their power of expression is not adequate to their conception. In them "burns a truer light of God" than in the others, although it may not shine so far because the windows of their souls are not so easily thrown open.

Taking the hero of Browning's poem as the type of those who can execute well whatever they conceive, but whose conceptions are not of the highest order, we may still inquire whether the Andrea del Sartos of literature form a very numerous class. And here we come to the old question, much debated but still unsettled—what is genius? For a long time it was held that genius is a divine touch bestowed only on a favored few, who are thus separated by a great gulf from the mass of men; just as in statesmanship it was believed that the few were divinely ordained to rule the many. In these days when equality is the watchword of political and social progress, we are in danger of going to the other extreme and acting as if men